

THE
INTERNATIONAL  INSTITUTE
OF CHINA.

BY
REV. GILBERT REID.



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REPORT
OF THE
MISSION AMONG THE HIGHER CLASSES IN CHINA.

THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE.

BY
REV. GILBERT REID.

This report is a condensed report of six others previously issued.

The International Institute is the result of the Mission among the Higher Classes. It is the Mission presented in institutional form.

A mission among the higher classes is not so much a mission *to* them, as a mission *for* them,— and so *through* and *with* them *for* the masses.

This special line of work, directed to a special class, aims to reach the greatest results by utilizing the greatest energies and the highest influence. It has not been suddenly projected out of one's wild imagination or internal consciousness; the plan is not primarily formed in accordance with conditions in other lands, but it is the result of years of hard work and experience, and is adapted especially to the present conditions of China. It is therefore directed to those on the ground, acquainted with the work, rather than at a distance from those unfamiliar with the special requirements and special methods.

To explain the evolution of the thought and the work, the statement made must be a personal one. For ten years I was a missionary in the Province of Shantung under the Presbyterian Board of New York City. During seven years of this time, while engaged in the usual forms of mission work, my time and tastes were more and more directed to a new department of labor among the official classes. Owing to the opposition which our missionaries experienced in the matter of purchasing property

and securing protection, my intercourse with the officials was largely of a business kind, and as an opponent. After years of persistent pressure and frequent conferences, desirable sites for the missionary establishments were at last secured in the two largest cities, and what is more, peaceably so, and with the good will of the mandarins and local gentry.

At the end of ten years the Presbyterian mission in the Province of Shantung recommended that on my return to the United States this special work among the ruling classes be brought to the attention of the Churches, and that on my return to China I should represent the whole mission in cultivating more friendly intercourse with the officials of the Province, for at least a period of two years. After a furlough in the United States of a little over a year, the matter was carefully considered by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. After receiving a written statement from my self, expressing the intention to devote the rest of my life to the special work among the higher classes, and requesting that the Board express its candid opinion as to whether it would be more desirable that this work should be done under the Board or as an independent mission, the reply in substance was that the Board would prefer that I should devote most of my time to the work of preaching among the common people, and that if I desired to make the work among the higher classes a specialty it would be better to do so independently of any denominational Board. I therefore resigned from the Presbyterian Board with the greatest of respect for the efforts put forth by its missionaries, and with friendliness towards them all. The will of God seemed clear to me, and I decided to make the experiment in this untried department of missionary enterprise. I was willing to make a few explorations in the very large unknown territory of Chinese officialdom. The best place it seemed to me, for concentrating these efforts was in the political and literary centre of the whole Empire the City of Peking.

During the summer of 1894 the war arose between China and Japan. As the months passed by, it became more and more clear to my mind that an opportune time had come for putting forth efforts to reach the official classes in Peking. And so in the autumn of that year I returned to China. While my enthusiasm was commended by my friends, it was the prevailing opinion that my efforts would prove a failure. On reaching Peking I had to face the awful fact that of all the great number of officials I only had a personal acquaintance with three. Furthermore, it was not the custom for the officials to have intercourse with foreigners at their own homes. The only officials to deal with foreigners were the members of the Board of Foreign Affairs, and their intercourse was only with the foreign Ministers, or persons whom they might introduce, or such others as might be in the service of the Chinese Government. These relations were carried on either at the Foreign Office itself or at the Foreign Legations. The homes of the better class were closed to foreigners, except when, from time to time, they might call in the services of some foreign physician. This persistent exclusiveness has made the central government far less inclined to a progressive policy than the outside provinces, and may be regarded as one of the causes of China's decline during the last few years.

A short time after my return to Peking, one of the three official friends whom I had, a member of the Board of Foreign Affairs and a Minister in the Cabinet, came in person to call upon me to express his thanks for the efforts which I had put forth in the United States in behalf of better legislation for the Chinese laborers. He informed me that the various printed documents which I had been sending to him had for the most part, through his orders, been translated into Chinese, and were placed on file in the Foreign Office.

In a month or so I again adopted the Chinese costume, and made my first real attempt to gain an entrance to the exclusive official circle of Peking. I began, moreover, at the very top. I secured a list of the members of the Cabinet, and also of the Ministry of War, which at that time was the important body in the Empire. I prepared a letter which would be suitable for each one of these men. I also prepared a short statement referring to the needs of China at that time. I then went in person to call upon them. This, I may say, was in accordance with Chinese etiquette, for the rules of propriety in China require that the stranger should first call upon the resident. Within the next few weeks I made the acquaintance of five of these prominent officials, one of whom was the most powerful man in the Government at the time, and the great rival of Li Hung Chang, the tutor of the Emperor, and also the President of the Board of Revenue. He had never before met a foreigner. Another had been tutor of a previous Emperor, and had held high offices in Peking for over thirty years. A third had been a Governor in the provinces, and stood in great favor with the Emperor. A fourth was one of the princes, who for ten years had presided at the Board of Foreign Affairs. A fifth was a great favorite both with the Emperor and the Empress Dowager, and was the Military Governor of the city. All these received me at their own homes. Their friendship has remained unto the present time.

Among the highest officials there remained the most prominent of all still to be reached, Prince Kung. When I made the request to see him at his own palace, I was informed that this was contrary to usage, and that if I desired to present any document or letter, to him, I must do it at the Foreign Office. But here was a difficulty. Thus far no foreigner who had no official position in his own government, or in the Chinese Government, had been admitted to that body without an introduction from his own Minister. Having, however, already made the acquaintance of all but two of the members of the Foreign Office, I called upon the Under Secretaries and asked them if it would be proper for them to present for me a letter addressed to Prince Kung. They replied that, under the circumstances, and in accordance with the consent of the Prince, there would be no objection. I therefore presented a letter at the Foreign Office which the Under Secretaries handed to the Prince within the palace. This was the first opening to that important body. The communication then and there begun in a formal way has improved rather than diminished during the three years which have passed.

In a few months Prince Kung sent word to me that he would be glad to

see me at a certain hour at the Board of Foreign Affairs. He received me most cordially, and with the greatest of courtesy. He desired to know the object of my visit to Peking. I told him in brief that it was to do anything to help on China, and he replied. "Yes, we know that you are a friend of China, and any time you desire to present any document to us you can feel free to do so at this place. I am willing to see you here, even though you may have no official rank." From that time on I continued to present documents, both to the Prince and to the Foreign Office as a body, discussing various questions pertaining to the welfare of the country and in the interests of progress and peaceableness.

Having made the acquaintance of these men, high in authority, some of whom had a world-wide reputation, I next made an inroad into the ranks of the men who formed the Censorate, or the Hanlin College, which is the highest literary body in the Empire. It is well known that, as a rule, the Chinese literati have been the strongest foes to the missionaries, and that whenever riots have arisen they have either been instigated or countenanced by these men. By a cautious and friendly spirit, I managed to make the acquaintance of a large number of these men, many of whom had never before had any intercourse with foreigners. Some of them had been even intensely prejudiced against foreigners, and especially missionaries. The friendship of these men I have greatly enjoyed. I have invited them to dine at my own house, and many of them have reciprocated. Several of them have always been ready to assist me in the preparation of pamphlets and books, prepared in the best classical style possible, and in many cases they have refused any compensation. Time and time again they have said to me, "If you, a foreigner, can work for the good of our country, we should be willing to help."

One of the first Censors to call upon me was an old man of national reputation, noted for his purity of life and strict honesty, daring and high-minded. In the course of the conversation, I showed to him something which I had just written with reference to the corruption of the Chinese Government. He said to me, "Yes, this is all true; you have told us of the disease, can you tell us the cure?" I replied that I would prepare in a few days a prescription which I would send to him, and if he found it all right, I would be glad if he would make it known to the Emperor. I at once went to work, and, with the aid of two writers of fair literary ability, prepared a document dealing first with the cause and the occasion of the disease of this sick man of the far East; and next, prescribing the remedy for the cause and for the occasion of the disease. A copy I sent to this Censor, and his reply was, "I will cherish the ideas which you have unfolded, and will place your paper high up in my archives." I preferred that he should have placed it before the Emperor rather than in his archives, but he hardly had the courage to do this, for I had made a clear and unflinching statement concerning the awful corruption of the present Chinese system of government. After a few months this document was brought to the attention of a high official, who was also a tutor of the Emperor, a man of pure motives and upright life. He made a few corrections and recommended that I get

it printed for circulation, I then sent copies to every important official in Peking and to a large number of others having less authority, but being more progressive. I had the hope that something might be done to bring about the reform of China. Nothing definite, however, was accomplished.

About this time a spirit of reform had arisen among the younger men. From their high literary rank they possessed great influence. An English missionary, the Rev. Timothy Richard, was visiting Peking, whom I introduced to several of the more active leaders in the new movement. We had several conferences together, until what was known as a "Reform Club" was actually started by these young men in this conservative centre of the Empire. Their spirit of reform was, however, more literary and educational than moral. They lacked the strong underlying principles of an active morality, made living by religious convictions. Nevertheless the movement was encouraging. A beginning was made. But hardly had they begun, when, through suspicions from those of the Imperial family, and on the basis of a memorial condemning the movement by a Censor who was hostile to the leaders of this movement, an edict was suddenly issued by the Emperor commanding that the Reform Club be at once closed up. This frightened or disheartened several of these young men. Another Censor, however, presented a memorial in favor of this movement, and requested that the matter be referred to the Board of Foreign Affairs for consideration. As a result, Imperial sanction was secured for the establishment of what was called "The Official Book Depot," under the charge of one of the tutors of the Emperor, this friend of mine mentioned above, who had reviewed the document which I had prepared relating to the reform of the government. Being under official auspices, this organization has lacked spontaneity and independence, and has accomplished but little good. The spirit of progress has continued to grow, but is not strong enough as yet to secure a thorough reform in the Chinese Government.

I continued to devote a great deal of my time to the cultivation of friendly and social relations with the Chinese officials. During my first ten years in China I had made the acquaintance of at least one hundred mandarins, while during the two years and more of my residence in Peking I have added on three hundred more. Thus I have actually reached the polite number of the "Four Hundred" of China. Such a work, friendly and unofficial, a mere private individual making a private call at the private residence of the officials of the Capital, was undertaken without any precedent. Among a class of people where precedent has for centuries reigned supreme, a mere effort was a breaking down of Chinese exclusiveness. At the same time I tried to avoid giving any offence. Seeking first of all the interests of China, the effort, though without precedent, could only be regarded as friendly. It has always been my conviction that if a Chinese mandarin cannot be made a Christian we should seek to make him a friend rather than a foe.

Of these officials, whose acquaintance I have made, nearly eighty now hold office in the different provinces. In this way it has been possible to extend the influence from Peking to all the provinces, and to make the

Chinese officials more friendly towards the missionaries and their work. There is no limit to the possibilities or the benefits of this part of the general work of reaching the upper classes. Under the conditions of the Chinese political system it is possible to exert an influence all over the Empire by exerting an influence at the political centre of the Empire, or through the political leaders of the Empire.

In addition to all this friendly intercourse of a social character, and the preparation of documents discussing questions which pertain to the welfare and development of China, it became more and more clear to me that something more definite, practical, tangible and real was necessary. I therefore drew up the plan which for a long time I had had in my mind for the establishment in Peking of an institute of learning, to be known as the International Institute. This differed from a college or university in that its aim would be the more general enlightenment of grown-up men who would be unable to go through a technical course of training. The great object of such an institution would be the promotion of greater friendliness between the Chinese and foreigners, and especially between the officials and missionaries; the adoption of measures of enlightenment and progress, the extension of the cause of truth and righteousness, the opening up of the country to Western education, commercial development and missionary enterprises, and the hastening on of the prosperity of China and the elevation of her people, so as to insure the independence of her government without fear of foreign powers, and the peace, happiness and redemption of the Chinese race.

Such an object could not but commend itself to the Chinese authorities if they were actuated at all by any patriotic feelings. The work to be done in such an institute would be in harmony with the present condition of China, and suited to her needs in the present crisis. I therefore proposed the erection of buildings which would consist of a public library, a museum or exhibit hall, offices and reception rooms, class rooms and a large auditorium. I asked that the regulations, as drawn up, be submitted to the Emperor for Imperial sanction. I was informed that this was contrary to every precedent of the past, and that while my purpose and plan were good, it was impossible at the present time to grant my request. A promise, however, was made to confer on the matter some time in the future.

About this time the famous statesman, Li Hung Chang, returned from his tour around the world. I resumed my acquaintance with him, and in the very first interview he suggested that instead of pushing the scheme for an international institute I should assist him in forming the plan for a university, to be under government control. I promised to assist him, and had several conferences on the matter. We reached agreement on the main points, but by that time it became evident that the government was not ready and had no money to establish in Peking such an university. Both of these plans, the one for an international institute under foreign auspices, and the other for a university under Chinese auspices, were alike favored by Li Hung Chang, but his statement made again and again to me

was, " Nothing can be done. Our men are too conservative. It is impossible to secure their sanction."

In the midst of all this discouragement, at the beginning of the present year, 1897, there came another blow to my hopes, a trial to my faith, and the deepest sorrow to my heart. A message flashed across the wire from my home in the distant land that my father had passed away. Knowing that my aged mother needed my presence, I telegraphed back the message that I would probably come home in the spring. For a month, in gloom and despondency, the sun, though shining, was hid behind the clouds. Nothing that I had proposed to the Chinese authorities seemed possible of execution. The work that I had begun must now end, and end in failure. There was no one to carry on the work in my absence. The fact that I must return home a failure was by no means a pleasant one.

In spite of all this discouragement, I decided to make one more attempt. I also desired that my father, though dead, should yet speak. I conformed to the Chinese usage, and informed my official friends of the sorrow which had come, and prepared in Chinese a short "In Memoriam" of my father. I also sent a letter to the Board of Foreign Affairs and one to Prince Kung, in which, in substance, I said: "For over two years I have presented many documents discussing various important questions, but they have all been in vain. I have now received word of my father's death, and in consequence I must leave for my home in the month of April. At the last he still exhorted me to continue in my purpose to help China, and this counsel I will heed. Some months ago I presented the regulations of an institute to be established in Peking, and the promise was made to see and consult with me. I would be much pleased if an appointment should be made, etc., etc."

In a few days a reply came with the cards of Li Hung Chang and another Minister of the Foreign Office appointing the time for a conference, and requesting my presence. At that conference I was informed that it would be impossible to memorialize the throne at that time, but that a formal sanction of my plan for an international institute would be given me, and that if I should succeed in raising money and erecting buildings, a memorial could then be presented to the Emperor, praying his Imperial sanction.

Not long after, this formal sanction was sent to me. It was under the seal of the Board of Foreign Affairs. It had been granted by all the princes and ministers, nine in all, who formed that body. The document, moreover, was sent to me direct. All this was a decided innovation. It indicated progress, for though many of the officials did not themselves care to initiate measures of progress, they were willing that a scheme of progress should be carried out by a foreigner. It was the first time that a foreign scheme, under foreign auspices had been sanctioned by the Chinese Government. This was, to use a commercial term, the first concession granted to a foreigner.

Just at this favorable juncture of affairs, the Rev. W. A. P. Martin, D.D., LL.D., returned to Peking. It was forty-seven years since he first

came to China, and for over thirty years of this period he had been in the Chinese service, the President of the Imperial College. After consultation, he decided to join in with me in the work of the proposed institute. No better man could I have found anywhere in China. His coming made my going possible. The way was now open for me to put forth the efforts to secure the funds needed for the erection of the buildings connected with this institute. The aid rendered to the undertaking by Dr. Martin, through his large experience, his great learning, his hearty enthusiasm, his varied gifts and his world-wide reputation, is incalculable. Well may I recognize the hand of Providence in the critical time, not only of China, but of my own life work.

It should also be stated that a wonderful impression had been made on the Chinese officials by the respect which I had shown to the memory of my father, in harmony with Chinese ideas. At once letters of condolence began to come to me. Many of my Chinese friends called in person to express their sympathy. Others wrote scrolls, or presented banners inscribed to the memory of my father, and containing choice expressions suited to the sad event, many of which were filled with the spirit and had the hope of our Christian religion. One of the first banners received was from the princes and ministers of the Board of Foreign Affairs. It was, indeed, a most remarkable fact, unprecedented in all the history of China, that noted princes and high ministers of state should do honor to the memory of one who lived in another land, whom they had never seen, and who was an humble preacher of the Gospel. Over two hundred officials of all ranks joined in to do honor to the one who had gone. Several of the highest officials in the government took the time to write out scrolls, either to the honor of my father or myself. Here was a testimony of friendliness more potent than that even of the formal sanction which had come from the Chinese Foreign Office.

Before I left Peking I was also presented with a testimonial from Li Hung Chang, which I could use in the United States and Europe. It commended the efforts which I had put forth, and also the plan which had been drawn up for the international institute, and promised his own aid in the future.

An Advisory Council was formed in Peking to guarantee a safe direction of the affairs of the institute, and the proper use of all funds. On reaching Shanghai a public meeting was called by the British and American Consul-Generals, which was largely attended by the business men of that community. A committee of ten men was appointed to render any assistance that might be necessary.

Learning from my mother that it would be unnecessary for me to hasten home, I spent a few months in raising money among foreigners and Chinese in Shanghai and elsewhere. Altogether, \$15,000, or one-fifth of the building fund, were subscribed. Here was an endorsement superior to that of mere Resolutions. Most of this money, which had been subscribed, came from the Chinese themselves. There were nine who subscribed \$750 each six Chinese and three Americans.

The estimated amount for erecting the buildings is \$75,000. Three English architects in Shanghai have stipulated to erect the buildings within that amount. Their drawings have been carefully prepared. Similar buildings, with a proper site, in any large city in the United States, would mean an expenditure of three times that amount.

The task now remains to raise the \$60,000 still remaining, and also to secure a nucleus for equipping the museum and library and for meeting the working expenses. The interest already shown makes me confident that this money will be secured. I am still more confident because I have faith in Providence. God, who has opened the doors in China, will open the doors in our Christian lands. What no one individual might be able to accomplish co-operation will succeed in doing. There is a chance, through agencies and forces already existing, to exert an influence for good, not only all over China, but through many of the cities of Europe and America. The institute is international, aiming to benefit the millions of Chinese through their own leaders, and to reach these leaders through those who are highly favored in our Christian lands.

In the Good Book it is written, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct thy paths." I desire, in this brief resume of three years' work, to acknowledge the guidance and rich blessing of our Heavenly Father, and to give to Him the glory for every success which has come. He has a more tender heart towards the needy ones of China than any of us, but if we listen to His commands and receive into our lives the spirit of the Divine Redeemer we may do much at this important time in the history of China, and through the agencies which God has placed there not only to help on the advancement and prosperity of China as a whole, but to bring light and happiness to many a home that is now beset by gloom, poverty, ignorance and hopelessness.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at their flood, lead on to fortune."

A grand opportunity awaits the earnest soul ready to help its fellow men.

October 15, 1897.

WARSAW, N. Y.



